

# Residential Building on or near Waterfront: Additional Requirements

10



A DDES Customer Information Bulletin



King County Department of Development and Environmental Services  
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<http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/>

## Frequently Asked Questions

King County DDES has created customer information bulletins to inform the general public about the effect of codes and regulations on their projects. These bulletins are not intended to be complete statements of all laws and rules and should not be used as substitutes for them. If conflicts and questions arise, current codes and regulations are final authority. Because the codes and regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult King County staff to be sure you understand all requirements before beginning work. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project meets all requirements of applicable codes and regulations.

The purpose of this bulletin is to help you comply with the detailed building permit requirements for any single family residence you plan to construct on shoreline (waterfront) locations in King County that are under the jurisdiction of the State Shoreline Management Action (SMA) of 1971. These requirements also apply when you remodel an existing structure or construct or remodel accessory structures, such as piers, moorages, or bulkheads. These requirements are in addition to other requirements and other permits that are, or may be, needed for development within shoreline jurisdictions.

Any shoreline development or construction project may require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and/or the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, in addition to approval from the King County Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES).

**The following requirements are in addition to those listed in Bulletin 9, Obtaining a Residential Building Permit.** If you still have questions after reviewing the information in this bulletin, contact DDES at 206-296-6600 to determine whether your property is covered by these requirements.

The following information must be shown on your plot plan if your residential building permit application is for a saltwater, lake, or river shoreline location.

For saltwater or freshwater locations, show the ordinary high water mark (OHWM). This is usually indicated by some general physical characteristics such as a clear natural line impressed in the bank by wave action or the beginning of upland vegetation. It could also be an existing bulkhead line.

If your location is on a saltwater shoreline, the OHWM would be the line of vegetation distinguishing the upland from the beach.

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10

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If your location is on a freshwater lakeshore and no line of upland vegetation or bulkhead is present, information on the ordinary high water line may be obtained from the Engineering Review Section of the Land Use Services Division at 206-296-6640.

For river locations, show the OHWM and upland edge of the floodway. The floodway is defined as the fast-moving portion of a river that would undermine pedestrian stability during flood conditions. Information on the floodway may be obtained from the Engineering Review Section of the Land Use Services Division.

For a river location, show the extent of the 100-year floodplain. This is the maximum water-covered area of a flood with an expected frequency of once every 100 years.

For Lake Sammamish, show the 100-year flood level at the elevation of 32.5 feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) and the OHWM at 27 feet (NGVD).

**Note:** Excavation, filling, grading, and placement of structures within the Lake Sammamish floodplain are prohibited.

For Lake Washington, show the OHWM as 15.13 (NGVD).

Show the topography of the site in 5-foot intervals or less:

Provide an engineered grading plan that illustrates the existing and proposed grades for your proposed residence, building, or structure within shoreline jurisdictions (that area 200 feet upland of the OHWM or to the upland edge of the 100-year floodplain or associated wetland, whichever is greater). Include at least one cross-section in each direction through the entire property and provide total structural and non-structural grading calculations.

**Note:** Grading calculations do not apply toward the construction of conventional drainfields and that portion of the site lying within the footprint of the house.

Illustrate the building height, as measured from *existing* grade to the top of the roof, on the grading plan cross sections. The maximum building height allowed within shoreline jurisdiction is 35 feet above the “average grade level,” which means the average of the natural or existing topography at the center of all exterior walls of a building or structure to be placed on a site.

Setback dimensions. This is the distance from the closest part of the structure, including any attached deck, to the OHWM. Structures must be located outside the floodway. Required setbacks vary according to the type of environment, as defined in the SMA:

Designation Setback Requirement	
Urban or rural	20 feet
Conservancy	50 feet
Natural	100 feet

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10

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Note:** Setbacks greater than those listed above may be required under the sensitive areas provisions of King County Code (K.C.C. chapter 21A.24).

Upland accessory structures such as cabanas, gazebos, detached decks, etc., may be permitted within the required setback area, subject to various limitations.

The following general development guidelines apply to typical accessory structures and are subject to shoreline review and approval prior to construction.

## Piers and moorages

- ◆ Piers may extend a maximum of 80 feet beyond the OHWM or to a water depth of 13 feet, whichever is reached first.
- ◆ Piers must not exceed a total surface area of 600 square feet.
- ◆ All portions of piers and other over-water structures must be set back at least 15 feet from the sides of adjacent property lines.

A construction cost estimate must be submitted with plans. Any pier that exceeds \$2,500 fair market value requires a Substantial Development Permit. Piers under \$2,500 require a shoreline exemption. Mooring buoys are normally allowed up to 80 feet offshore from the OHWM. In areas where the 80-foot limitation does not permit adequate depth, however, mooring buoys may be installed farther offshore, subject to King County DDES and/or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard approval. Covered moorage or boathouses are not permitted (K.C.C. 25.16.120(b)).

## Shoreline protection (bulkheads, riprapping, etc.)

Shoreline protection is normally permitted only when necessary to protect existing legally established structures and public improvements or to preserve important agricultural lands, as determined by King County DDES. Shoreline protection is not normally permitted waterward of the OHWM, except when necessary to tie in with existing bulkhead(s) installed no farther offshore than the original.

For more information about shoreline development, call a shoreline planner at the Land Use Services Division of DDES at 206-296-6640.

For information relating to floodways, identification of high water marks, etc., contact Engineering Review at the Land Use Services Division of DDES at 206-296-6640.

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10

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### Other bulletins and telephone numbers that may be helpful

Bulletin 1	Building and Development Permit Telephone Numbers
Bulletin 6	Working with Contractors
Bulletin 9	Obtaining a Residential Building Permit
Bulletin 12	The Residential Building Permit Process
Bulletin 16	Shoreline Erosion Control
Bulletin 17A	Zoning Code: Overview and Summary
Bulletin 21	Sensitive Areas Review
Bulletin 26	The SEPA Process
Bulletin 28	Clearing and Grading Permits

206-296-6600	DDES Information
206-296-6640	DDES Land Use Services Division



King County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you require an accommodation to attend a meeting (two weeks notice) or require this information in Braille, audiocassette, or large print, please call 206-296-6693 or TDD 206-296-7217.